

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAB-01 IO-10 AID-05 /082 W

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R 051231Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5836

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1431

E O 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, SY

SUBJECG: ISRAELI REACTION TO ASAD NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW

REF: DAMASCUS 0711

1. SOUNDINGS AMONG ISRAELI OFFICIALS OVER PAST SEVERAL DAYS ABOUT ASAD'S NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW AND SUBSEQUENT "CLARIFICATION" REVEAL THAT THOSE OFFICIALS SEE NO CHANGE IN SYRIAN POLICIES.

2. DIRECTOR, MFA NEAR EAST DIVISION (VERED), TOLD US MARCH 4 THAT IN HER VIEW THE RETRACTION BY THE DIRECTOR OF ASAD'S PRESS OFFICE ON FEB 26 (REFTEL) MUST BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, I.E. ASAD DID NOT SAY WHAT DEBORCHGRAVE REPORTED HE SAID CONCERNING PEACE TREATY. IN EXPLAINING HER CONCLUSION THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO SHIFT IN SYRIAN THINKING, VERED LAID EVEN GREATER STRESS ON ASAD SPEECH TO SYRIAN STUDENT UNION FEB 26 (FBIS TA 261650). RECALLING ASAD REFERENCE IN NEWSWEEK TO PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, SHE POINTED OUT THAT WHEN ASKED AT  
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STUDENT UNION WHAT THOSE RIGHTS WERE, HE HAD SUGGESTED THE PLO BE ASKED AND HAD SAID THAT SYRIA WOULD BACK UP PLO REPLY.

3. SPECULATING ON POSSIBLE REASONS FOR "PEACE TREATY" STATEMENT AND RETRACTION, VERED SAID EVEN IF NEWSWEEK VERSION OF INTERVIEW WERE CORRECT IT WAS OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED SOLELY TO ENHANCE IMAGE OF ASAD IN U.S. (SHE ADDED THAT DEBORCHGRAVE SEEMED TO BE GOOD AT LEADING PUBLIC FIGURES INTO STATEMENTS DESIGNED TO BE NEWSWORTHY IN U.S.) SHE DISAGREED WITH VIEW THAT RETRACTION WAS ONLY AIMED AT DOMESTIC CRITICS, CLAIMING THAT ASAD, WHILE LEADER OF MINORITY RULING GROUP, WAS IN FIRM CONTROL OF MILITARY AND T THEREFORE OF SYRIA.

4. IN SPEARATE CONVESATION, MFA ARAB AFFAIRS SPECIALIST (ADVISOR FOR OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ARIEL) REFERRED TO ASAD'S DEMAND FOR COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, POINTING OUT THAT TO ASAD THAT INCLUDES TEL AVIV. WE HAV ALSO BEEN RELIABLY INFORMED THAT IN THE VIEW OF SPECIAL ADVISOR TO DEFENSE MINISTER (HARKABI), NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW TAKEN AS WHOLE TOGETHER WITH ASAD SPEECH TO STUDENT UNION ONLY CONFIRMS HARKABI THINKING THAT SYRIAN GOAL REMAINS ELIMINATION OF ISRAEL AS JEWISH STATE.

5. ISRAELI PRESS IN FAIRLY LIMITED COVERAGE, HAS ALSO DISCOUNTED IMPORTANCE OF ASAD INTERVIEW. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC REACTION AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL.

6. COMMENT: SUBSTANCE OF NSRAELI REACTIONS TO ASAD INTERVIEW IS JUST ABOUT WHAT WE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED, GIVEN PROFOUND SKEPTICISM HERE REGARDING SYRIAN INTENTIONS. KEATING

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**TAGS:** PFOR, IS, SY, NEWSWEEK, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (DE BORCHGRAVE, ARNAUD)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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